

police.⁹ From that day on, Bulgaria was theoretically an Allied state, but was rapidly becoming—in effect—a Soviet protectorate.

THE BULGARIAN ARMY IN YUGOSLAV MACEDONIA, 1941-1944

The change in the international position of Bulgaria in September 1944 obviously had profound ramifications, affecting her overall orientation, and, inevitably, the position of the Bulgarian army; an enemy of Yugoslavia and Greece, so unexpectedly turned into an unwelcome ally. In Yugoslav Macedonia, few were able to foresee such a transformation, and—as will be apparent—even fewer were inclined to accept it.

The Bulgarians had been occupying the largest part of Yugoslav Macedonia, which coincided with the Slav-speaking areas of the province, since April 1941. The western, predominantly Albanian, zone was given over to the Italian-sponsored 'Greater Albania', much to the irritation of the Bulgarians. Sofia deeply resented Italy's gains and armed border incidents between the two 'allies' were not rare.¹⁰ Another irritating question regarding the newly acquired territory was its legal status: the Germans acquiesced in the occupation of Macedonia by Bulgaria, but they refused to concede to its formal annexation in order to keep the fate of the province as a useful bargain for the extraction of more concessions from Bulgaria in the future.

In Bulgaria, however, few bothered themselves with such a 'technicality', and the Filov government swiftly proceeded to the formal incorporation of the 'liberated territories' into the 'Motherland'. The province was divided into two *oblasti* (administrative districts), with Skopje and Bitolj as their respective centres, while the Sofia *oblast*

⁹ On the revolution of the Ninth of September, see Oren, *Bulgarian Communism*, 254-8.

¹⁰ For German-Bulgarian negotiations regarding Macedonia see Rastislav Terzioski, 'IMRO-Mihajlovist Collaborators and the German Occupation: Macedonia, 1941-1944', in Pero Morača (ed.), *The Third Reich and Yugoslavia, 1933-1945* (Belgrade, 1977), 388-9. For Italy's insistence on the Albanian zone see Galeazzo Ciano, *Diplomatic Papers*, ed. Malcolm Muggeridge (London 1948), 437-8. Despite Bulgarian pressure, the Germans refused to allow Bulgaria to annex the Albanian part after the capitulation of Italy in September 1943, and German units rushed to occupy Gostivar and Tetovo. The Bulgarians retaliated by expelling a good number of Albanians from Skopje. See WO 204/9677, 'Memoranda on Axis-controlled territories: Macedonia under the Bulgarians', dated 29/8/1943.

was expanded to include the area along the pre-war Bulgar-Yugoslav border; the border, however, was not officially abolished and some formalities continued to be observed. Between March and July 1941, all the administrative details were settled, and the Bulgarian press was in exuberant mood: *Tselokupna Bulgariya* (Undivided, Complete Bulgaria), it was declared, was at last a reality.¹¹ As was to be expected, symbolic rituals took place to celebrate the occasion: a flame was ignited in Preslav, the medieval Bulgarian capital, and was carried across the 'unified' country.¹²

The Bulgarian army made every effort to ensure that the 'Undivided Bulgaria' remained so, although Macedonian enthusiasm for the Bulgarian presence gradually wore thin.¹³ At the later stages of the occupation the Bulgarian army, assisted by IMRO bands, resorted to severe punitive expeditions, which further alienated the population. In mid-1944, British liaison officers in Macedonia reported, there were few villages that had not had some houses burned down, while in many cases during anti-guerrilla operations the Bulgarians seized the peasants' modest food and drove off their livestock.¹⁴ As might be expected, the Macedonian Serbs were dealt with by even more repressive measures. The Serbian community of Veles, for example, faced massive deportations, and out of the 25,000-strong Serbian population in Skopje, only 2,000 remained in the city by the beginning of 1942. It should be noted that IMRO bands were again quite active in the deportation of, and the punitive expeditions against, the Serbs.¹⁵

¹¹ On the administrative structure of Yugoslav Macedonia under the Bulgarians see FO 371/43649, Political Intelligence Centre Middle East, App. 'C', 3/1/1944. For the term 'Undivided Bulgaria', which was used to denote the 'Greater Bulgaria' first materialized in the San Stefano era, see Krustiu Manchev, 'Natsionalniyat Výpros na Balkanite do Vtorata Svetovna Voyna' [The National Question in the Balkans until the Second World War], in Institut po Balkanistika pri B.A.N., *Natsionalni Problemi na Balkanite: Istorija I Súvremenost* [National Questions in the Balkans: History and Current Situation] (Sofia, 1992), 15.

¹² Stephane Groueff, *Crown of Thorns* (New York, 1987), 302.

¹³ Cf. Chapter 6.

¹⁴ Information on the Bulgarian occupation by British Liaison Officers in Macedonia, in FO 371/43592, R19998, dated 30/11/1944.

¹⁵ Information included in a publication by the British Royal Institute of International Affairs, entitled 'Bulletin of International News', dated 11/12/1943, in WO 208/2028. Needless to say, the Bulgarian bibliography is pointing only to the brighter aspects of the occupation. See Lilia Filipova, introd., in Institut za Voena Istorija, *Vardarska Makedoniya, 1941–1944 v Jugoslovskata Istoricheska Literatura* [Vardar Macedonia, 1941–1944, in Yugoslav Historical Literature] (Sofia, 1992), 8–12, and Dobrin Michev, 'Búlgarskata Komunisticheska Partiya I Makedonskiyat Výpros do 9 Septemvri 1944

For most of the wartime period the Bulgarian army carried out their duties almost unchallenged, for their opponents had to settle their internal problems first. These were not in short supply. Between 1941 and the beginning of 1943, the Macedonian regional committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) was dominated by pro-Bulgarian elements, who had decided in 1941 to abandon the CPY and to join the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP).¹⁶ They, therefore, refused to wage a guerrilla war against the Bulgarians. Under the leadership of Metodi Šatorov (alias Šarlo), the Macedonian committee followed the BCP line closely, and argued that guerrilla operations could not be sustained in Macedonia, as conditions there were 'different', and 'not ripe' for revolutionary war as advocated by Tito. In fact, Šatorov went as far as to accuse Tito of being 'Anglophile', because he dared to proclaim that Yugoslavia (and Macedonia) was 'enslaved by the occupiers'.¹⁷ Obviously, for Šatorov the 'occupiers' were the Serbs, not the Bulgarians.

Tito, furious with the 'Old Bulgar' (i.e. Šatorov), appealed to the Comintern to solve the dispute. The Russians, desperate to keep as many Germans as possible away from the Eastern Front, supported Tito's line for armed struggle. Moreover, they appeared reluctant to concede the enlargement of Bulgaria suggested by the official fusion of the Skopje Committee with the BCP. Thus, in September 1941, the Comintern, in a reserved resolution, ruled that 'for technical reasons', and 'for the time being', the Skopje Committee should remain within the CPY. The Bulgarians swiftly backed down, and Šatorov sought solace in Bulgaria.¹⁸

godina', [The Communist Party of Bulgaria and the Macedonian Question until 9 September 1944], *Voennoistoricheski Sbornik*, 6 (1986), 18.

¹⁶ The BCP was then called *Bulgarska Rabotnicheska Partiya* (Bulgarian Workers' Party) but became 'Communist' again in 1948.

¹⁷ Ivo Banac, *With Stalin, Against Tito: Cominformist Splits in Yugoslav Communism* (Ithaca, NY and London, 1988), 5. For the situation in the regional committee of the CPY between 1941 and 1943 and the role of Šatorov see also Stephen Palmer and Robert King, *Yugoslav Communism and the Macedonian Question*, (Hamden, Conn., 1971), 65–7; Paul Shoup, *Communism and the Yugoslav National Question* (London and New York, 1968), 52–4; Elisabeth Barker, *Macedonia: Its Place in Balkan Power Politics* (London, 1950), 84–8. The Yugoslav (and Macedonian) case is presented in Svetozar Vukmanović (General *Tempo*), *Struggle for the Balkans* (London, 1991), 1–10. For the Bulgarian view see Kostadin Paleshutski, *Iugoslavskata Komunisticheska Partiya I Makedonskiyat Vüpros, 1919–1944* [The Yugoslav Communist Party and the Macedonian Question, 1919–1944] (Sofia, 1984), 284–91.

¹⁸ For the text of the Comintern's resolution see Stephen Clissold, *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union: A Documentary Survey* (London, 1973), 153. For the reasons behind the Russian decision, see Palmer and King, *Yugoslav Communism*, 678.

Despite the Comintern's decision the situation in Yugoslav Macedonia still left much to be desired for Tito, for the pro-Bulgarian attitude of the Macedonian communists remained a formidable obstacle. Between 1941 and 1943, Tito sent no less than five emissaries to Macedonia, to persuade his ill-disciplined comrades to follow the official line and launch guerrilla war. Their efforts met with only limited success, and the Skopje Committee was effectively controlled by the Bulgarian 'representatives' Petăr Bogdanov and Boyan Bûlgaranov. The fifth of Tito's delegates, the Montenegrin Svetozar Vukmanović, who came to Macedonia in February 1943, proved to be the most effective. Vukmanović, nicknamed *Tempo* after his favourite phrase—'we must accelerate our tempo'¹⁹—was a forceful speaker with strong organizational skills, and, significantly, had demonstrated unfailing loyalty to Tito.²⁰ Moreover, he had a considerable amount of local knowledge, and, being Montenegrin, did not share the anti-Serbian syndromes of the Macedonian communists.²¹

Tempo's descent into the internal squabbles of the Macedonian communists marked the decline of Bulgarian influence, and the corresponding rise of Tito's authority. Perhaps his most important initiative was the creation of the Communist Party of Macedonia (CPM). Aware that even the mention of the word 'Yugoslav' provoked almost allergic reactions among the Slav-Macedonians, *Tempo* worked out a compromise that could satisfy both sides. The word 'Macedonian' in the title of the new party played on the sensitivity of the Macedonians, affording them some sort of 'political individuality'. At the same time, however, *Tempo* stressed that the newly formed party was—and would always be—an integral part of the CPY under the leadership of Tito.²² In all, by the

¹⁹ The source for Vukmanović's *nom de guerre* is Milovan Djilas, *Memoir of a Revolutionary* (New York, 1973), 354.

²⁰ Vukmanović, together with the Serbian Aleksandar Ranković, the Slovene Edvard Kardelj, and the Jewish Pijade formed the upper echelon of the CPY. They all belonged to a rather compact layer of communist cadres, which was 'crystallized' at the time of Tito's chairmanship of the CPY after extensive purges. See Ivan Avakumović, *History of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia* (Aberdeen, 1964), 137.

²¹ *Tempo* had been engaged in propaganda work before the war in Skopje along with Djilas, another Montenegrin. Both tried hard to persuade the Macedonians to stick with the CPY. Strangely enough, it seemed that Montenegrins were among the key players in the Macedonian Question. For *Tempo*'s pre-war activity in Macedonia see Stephen Clissold, *Whirlwind: An Account of Marshal Tito's Rise to Power* (London, 1949), 135, and Barker, *Macedonia*, 92.

²² Palmer and King, *Yugoslav Communism*, 76–8. Naturally, the exact amount of the 'political individuality' of the Macedonians, as opposed to the political centralism

summer of 1943 Tempo had managed to reinforce Tito's authority in Macedonia. Naturally, he had many doubts about the durability of his success. But his main achievement was that the wartime pro-Bulgarian trend receded into the background of Yugoslav–Macedonian politics.²³

Naturally, these internal problems greatly impaired the development of guerrilla warfare in the area. The first few *Partizanski Odredi* (Partisan Detachments) in Macedonia, formed by Lazar Koliševski, in 1941—poorly trained and ill-organized—proved no match for the Bulgarian army, and were easily destroyed. Their leader's fate was equally unfortunate: he was arrested under suspicious circumstances.²⁴ The guerrilla movement had to wait for more propitious times. It started to develop only after Tempo's 'restructuring' of the Skopje organization. Tempo decided to shift the focus of Partisan action from the Bulgarian to the Italian zone, where the terrain was more favourable and the occupation regime less efficient.²⁵

Despite Yugoslav propaganda, however, especially after 1944, the Macedonian armed units never became the formidable military force their leader, Mihailo Apostolski, claimed they were.²⁶ Their performance

sponsored by Tito, remained a permanent source of friction between Belgrade and Skopje, and is an issue of paramount importance for a more balanced assessment of the development of the Macedonian Question within the 'New Yugoslavia'. For more details and analysis see Chapter 6.

²³ Tempo's mission is given in his own account: Vukmanović, *Struggle for the Balkans*, which bears the burden of the author's role, and therefore should be used with caution. A much more balanced approach is given in Palmer and King, *Yugoslav Communism*, 76–83, which draws extensively on Yugoslav archival sources, including Tempo's worrying telegrams to Tito. These telegrams and letters clearly demonstrate the discrepancy between the realities in the field and Tempo's depiction of the struggle of 'the Macedonian nation'.

²⁴ Tempo alludes to the suspicion that Koliševski was arrested as a result of betrayal by the pro-Bulgarian elements of the Skopje Committee. Vukmanović, *Struggle*, 29. Koliševski—initially sentenced to death but subsequently to life imprisonment—spent the war in the prisons of Skopje and Pleven, in Bulgaria. He was set free in Sept. 1944, when he came back to Skopje and became the first premier of the 'People's Republic of Macedonia'. His time in Pleven had not been without some benefit, for his inmates were prominent members of the BCP.

²⁵ Palmer and King, *Yugoslav Communism*, 83.

²⁶ Lt. Gen. Mihailo Apostolski was one of the very few Macedonian officers of the Royal Yugoslav Army, and since 1941 became one of Tito's close aides. After a brief period—under a false name—in Sofia university, where he conducted underground work, he came back to Tito's HQ in 1942. In 1943 he was sent to Macedonia with Tempo. It should be noted that most of the Slav-Macedonian bibliography on the Partisan warfare in Yugoslav Macedonia has been written by Apostolski himself. See e.g. Mihailo Apostolski, 'La Guerre de la libération en Macédoine', *Revue d'histoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale*, 87 (1972), 15–32. Information about Apostolski combined

in the field, despite their bravery, hardly deserved the official praise lavished on them. British liaison officers, attached to Macedonian Detachments in 1944 and very keen to assess their actual military strength, drew a rather gloomy picture. The Partisans, despite their immense suffering and hardships, remained little more than a nuisance to Bulgarian and German forces, at least until the summer of 1944. Despite the Italian capitulation in September 1943, which afforded them some room to manoeuvre in the western part of the region, the Partisans suffered from an almost total lack of training, and displayed a striking ignorance of military tactics. Unable to carry out serious military operations, they tried to preserve their forces, something that Apostolski did not hide from his BLOs. It should be stressed that they were so ill-equipped to cope with the hardships of guerrilla warfare that in desperation they asked the British to supply them with boots, for only one-third of them possessed adequate footwear. As a result many Partisans died of exposure in the winter of 1944.²⁷ Their need for material of all kinds prompted them to steal equipment from the British 'Brasenose' mission. Even Cvetko Uzunovski, veteran of the Spanish Civil War and a prominent Macedonian military leader, indulged in appropriating British war material.²⁸

As might be expected, Apostolski used inflated language to describe both the number and strength of his Partisans. By the end of 1944, he maintained, the National Army of Macedonia amounted to 23 infantry brigades—1 motorized—4 artillery brigades, and cavalry, organized in 7 divisions and 3 army corps, a total of 66,000 men.²⁹ This estimate, however, conveys a rather deceptive picture. For a start, the Partisans remained extremely poorly armed throughout the war, with no artillery, and had to content themselves with mules rather than motorized transport. Apart from that, many Partisans did not even have weapons, and only after the British dropped significant quantities in the summer did the guerrillas become sufficiently armed and clothed.

from British sources. See FO 371/48184, notes on Macedonian personalities compiled by Sqd. Ldr. Hill, BLO with the Macedonian HQ, attached to R13695, from Ralph Skrine Stevenson to Ernest Bevin, 6/8/1945.

²⁷ See the detailed report of Capt. Macdonald, attached to Apostolski's HQ in FO 371/43739, entitled: 'Report of Mission Brasenose by Capt. Macdonald, BLO', dated 11/10/1944. Macdonald asked Bari for some sorties, but it was decided that all available war material should be sent to Tito. Although some material was sent to the Macedonians in April–May, a 'crying need' of boots was not met until July.

²⁸ WO 202/1209, report by 'Brasenose' mission, dated 11/10/1944.

²⁹ Apostolski, *La Guerre*, 27, 32.

They received more after the events of the Ninth of September, when large quantities of Bulgarian war material fell into their hands. After that, they enjoyed the luxury of motor transport, and the equipment of a Bulgarian cavalry regiment.³⁰

Further, it is difficult to trace a hint of the 'four artillery Brigades' mentioned by Apostolski, for, as shall be seen, during the operations leading to the liberation of Macedonia in the autumn of 1944, all the artillery support for the infantry was provided by the Bulgarian army. The size of the Partisan forces also appeared to be a gross exaggeration. Although the strength of the Macedonian brigades varied greatly, as late as October 1944 BLOs reported that there were fifteen brigades operating in Yugoslav Macedonia.³¹ Even allowing for the fact that Apostolski was markedly uncooperative and tried to prevent the British from obtaining military information, it may safely be said that the number of 60,000 men was wishful thinking rather than reality.

As far as their fighting qualities were concerned, it seems that they did not depart from the typically Balkan 'brigand' tradition: 'hit-and-run' attacks, mainly ambushes, poor discipline, a dependence more on personal bravery than on military planning, and a 'cyclical' concept of military action, which required a prudent apathy during the winter and attacks during the spring.³² According to this pattern, their offensive spirit grew stronger from spring 1944 onwards. At that time they managed to inflict heavy losses on the Bulgarians, who unsuccessfully tried to encircle them, while by the end of summer, armed with British supplies, they created some 'liberated zones' mainly in the Albanian part of Yugoslav Macedonia, and always in close collaboration with the Kosovar Brigades. In general, during Partisan operations the BLOs did not fail to observe frequent desertions and a considerable amount of naiveté concerning military planning.³³

³⁰ Information about the Partisans' military strength and equipment derived from the report of Capt. Macdonald in FO 371/43739, cited above.

³¹ Macdonald Report. It should be added that there were also two Kosovar Brigades, the second operating around Skopje. According to the British their fighting abilities thwarted the Macedonians. Apostolski himself intimated to Capt. Macdonald, in Jan. 1944, that the Kosovars did most of the fighting, while the latter looked constantly down on the Macedonians, saying that a Kosovar Brigade could do better than a Macedonian Division.

³² Such a pattern of warfare had been well known in Macedonia since the early 20th cent., when Greek and Bulgarian bands clashed in a 'Struggle for Macedonia'.

³³ Macdonald Report.

As is usually the case in a guerrilla war, however, the most important aspect of Partisan ventures in Macedonia was its political rather than its military dimension. It is well known that, regular armies cannot be defeated by guerrillas;³⁴ so it would have been too much to expect this to happen in wartime Yugoslav Macedonia. In fact, it was in the political sphere that the true significance of the Partisan detachments was actually revealed.

These detachments primarily served as a political instrument for the indoctrination of the Macedonians along the lines set by the CPY. From this perspective, they must be seen as the military wing of a wider network set up and politically backed by the CPY. This network consisted of the CPM, the National Liberation Committees, and various youth and women's organizations, and aimed at integrating the 'ethnically' and politically diverse Macedonian society, and promoting the idea of 'brotherhood and unity' with the other peoples of Yugoslavia. The Macedonian army, therefore, was an instrument for the 'Macedonianization' of the Macedonians. It practised the politics of integration by including in its rank and file men of all inclinations. Even ardent pro-Bulgarians joined in, when they thought it wise not to clash with the new rulers of the region. Moreover, Apostolski tried hard to suppress the traditional enmity between the Serbs and the Macedonians, by intensifying political agitation, and forming mixed—i.e. Serbo-Macedonian—bands.³⁵ Although the Serbs felt little 'brotherhood' and the Macedonians wanted no 'unity', the fact remained that Apostolski's effort to foster 'comradeship in arms' was among the first attempts to overcome this enmity in the history of the Yugoslav state.

Apart from these aspects, the Macedonian army, being the only centre of political activity in the area, furnished the newly founded People's Republic of Macedonia with its first cadres and officials. Thus it was not surprising that Apostolski was among the key figures during the First Session of *Antifašističko Sobranie na Narodnoto Oslobođuvanje na Makedonija* (Anti-Fascist Assembly of the National Liberation of Macedonia, ASNOM), in the St Prohor Pčinjski monastery on 2 August 1944. It is perhaps of interest to note that the guerrilla leader attended the session in a magnificent uniform sent by Tito especially

³⁴ On the significance of guerrilla warfare and its limitations see Walter Laqueur, *Guerrillas: A Historical and Critical Study* (London, 1976).

³⁵ WO 201/1122, Balkan Political Intelligence, Copy No. 95, 31/7/1944.

Apart from political reasons, there were also more personal motives. As has already been seen, the Partisans had to content themselves with only rudimentary clothing and light weapons. Consequently, they resented seeing their Bulgarian 'liberators' wearing smart and warm uniforms, and bearing modern weapons, supplied to them by the Germans during wartime.⁷² Perhaps a typical expression of the prevailing mood was the incident that occurred in Skopje in November, when the Partisans refused to allow Damyan Velchev, Bulgarian minister of war, to enter the city, for, as they said, four years of Bulgarian occupation had done more harm to Macedonia than twenty years of Serbian yoke.⁷³

Military realities, however, made this incident look very ironic indeed, for Skopje was liberated by Bulgarian forces, while the Macedonian Partisans remained in the surrounding hills, and came down only to celebrate their entrance to the city. Similar scenes occurred in many other towns of Macedonia and Serbia, pointing to the fact that, from a military perspective, the Russians were right: the Bulgarian army was the only force capable of driving the Germans quickly out of Yugoslavia.⁷⁴ Needless to say, the official Slav-Macedonian historiography, written mainly by Apostolski himself, understandably played down the crucial role of the Bulgarians. The glorification of the Partisan movement—an essential component of the post-war Yugoslav political culture—and the more personal Partisan considerations left little room for such 'technicalities'.⁷⁵

The successes of the Bulgarian army certainly did not come as music to British ears either. Thus, it was with a sense of disappointment that the Foreign Office received reports stressing that the Bulgarians 'have been doing very well against the Germans'. George Clutton minuted on this development in unequivocal language, which clearly reflected the British determination to prevent Bulgaria from becoming an officially

4/12/1944, and FO 371/43611, R20624, 12/12/1944, 'Notes on Serb-Partisan–Bulgarian Relations during the Period August–November 1944'.

⁷² For complaints of that kind see WO 201/1122, Balkan Political Review, 18/10/1944. Maclean also reported about this feeling. Cf. FO 371/43608, R14643, 6/10/1944.

⁷³ For this incident, and its background, see Ch. 6.

⁷⁴ For information on the military situation in Macedonia and Serbia and the role of the Bulgarian army see FO 371/43608, R17271, 24/11/1944; FO 371/44279, R16642, 14/10/1944; FO 371/43630, R19495, 24/11/1944; WO 208, 113B, 12/9/1944. These

recognized co-belligerent state. 'We do not recognize the Bulgarians as co-belligerents, so we soft-pedal references on these successes'. Nevertheless, he felt obliged to justify his views on moral grounds: 'There is a tendency in Great Britain to regard Bulgaria as having been hardly treated, but she has black and treacherous record.'⁷⁶ The BBC was accordingly instructed not to boost the Bulgarian contribution to the war. Thus, although the American and Soviet radio correctly attributed the liberation of Skopje to the Bulgarians, the BBC ignored their vital role, infuriating Sofia.⁷⁷

Tito seemed equally disconcerted about the protracted Bulgarian presence in Yugoslavia. From late October onwards, he had tried to persuade the Soviets to order the withdrawal of his comrades, but without success. As the Bulgarian army completed its duties in Macedonia and Serbia in December and started moving north, Tito's patience ran out. Amidst numerous reports on the conduct of the Bulgarians, which resembled the complaints about the Red Army after 1948, the Marshal stepped up his pressure.⁷⁸ In May 1945, when the whole of Yugoslavia had been liberated, he undertook a more definitive move to pay off his political scores with his 'allies'. Tempo and the commander of the Yugoslav National Army, Arso Jovanović, were sent to Vienna to demand from Marshal Tolbukhin an immediate withdrawal. Tolbukhin agreed, and the Third Yugoslav Army was quick to issue the order of the day, which describes best not only the Yugoslav relief, but the semantics of the communist rhetoric at the time as well: 'Say good-bye

⁷⁶ FO 371/43630, R18509, minute by Clutton, 14/11/1944.

⁷⁷ FO 371/43630, R19488, 18/11/1944. It is perhaps of interest to note here that the British historiography on Yugoslavia also downplayed the critical role of the Soviet and Bulgarian armies in the liberation of this country, and appears to support the view that Yugoslavia was liberated by the Partisans alone. The fact that Belgrade was liberated with the help of the Red Army, and Skopje by the Bulgarians, is rarely mentioned. It can be said that the political situation in the 1960s and early 1970s, when in Western Europe Tito commanded a fair amount of admiration, as an example of non-Stalinist communism, was a not negligible factor for such an overrated assessment. This has also coloured assessments of Tito. A typical example is Auty's biography of Tito. See Phyllis Auty, *Tito: A Biography* (London, 1970). A more balanced view, although unfriendly to the Marshal, is offered in Stevan Pavlowitch, *Tito: Yugoslavia's Great Dictator* (London, 1992). On Tito's mediocre calibre as a guerrilla leader see also Djila's account, in Milovan Djilas, *Tito: The Story from Inside* (New York and London, 1980), 11.

⁷⁸ Cf. e.g. complaints from Partisans in Eastern Serbia, according to which the Bulgarians were stripping the houses of all removable property. FO 371/43609, R17688, 22/11/1944. For a longer list of complaints see Nesovic, *Yugoslav*, 55–6.